



COMMONWEALTH BUREAU OF CENSUS AND STATISTICS.

Canberra A.C.T.
10th September, 1940.

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FRM/MP.

CHANGES IN UNEMPLOYMENT IN GREAT BRITAIN.

Unemployment in mid-June compared with mid-May, 1940.

(Source: The Statist, July 13, 1940)

Between May 20 and June 17 there was reduction of 113,987 in the number of unemployed persons on the registers to 766,835, equivalent to a drop of 13 per cent. on the corresponding figure for May and one of 43 per cent. on the total for June, 1939, which stood at 1,350,000. The number of wholly unemployed has declined on the month by 12 per cent., while temporary and casual unemployment both receded by over 20 per cent. In the wholly unemployed category, the only group in which the general downward movement was not shared was that of women workers, the number of which rose by 3.6 per cent. on the month to 225,777.

Numbers Unemployed on Registers at June 17, 1940.

Particulars	Persons normally in regular employment		Persons normally in casual employment	Total
	Wholly unemployed	Temporarily stopped		
Men ..	382,337	38,681	35,390	456,408
Boys ..	14,047	988	94	15,129
Women ..	225,777	39,522	1,654	266,953
Girls ..	26,153	2,189	3	28,345
Total:	648,314	81,380	37,141	766,835

The true importance of this figure appears from a comparison with the June total for women workers temporarily stopped, which reveals a drop, against the May position, of more than 35 per cent. It is evident that unemployment among regular women workers in industry is rapidly diminishing, and an explanation of the upward movement in the number of wholly unemployed women must be sought, not in industrial movements, but in the influx of new recruits into insurable occupations. The net result of these opposed tendencies is that the total of women's unemployment remains at the same level as a year ago, at 267,000. Among men, on the other hand, unemployment has been reduced since June, 1939, by 55 per cent., so far as the total is concerned. The same proportion holds good for the decline in the number of men wholly unemployed, while in the case of those temporarily stopped the reduction amounts to 70 per cent. The massive scale of this movement obscures the entry into insurable employment of men previously in non-insurable occupations.

That is but one of the unknowns in the Ministry's monthly returns. A more important one is the number of men who have been absorbed into military service, while another, which in no way affects the statistics, is that of the people who have lost their employment through the war and have not yet registered with the exchanges. None of these unknown factors can hide the one great fact that the country is rapidly advancing towards the marginal position of minimum unemployment and, therefore, to a position in which everything possible will have to be done to maximise the value of individual output. The appointment of Sir William Beveridge as surveyor of man-power shows the Minister's awareness of a problem, the intensity of which has been magnified by the loss to the Allied cause

of the productive resources of France. There is one aspect of the problem which would probably be held to lie outside his terms of reference, namely, the utilisation of alien man and woman power. One tragic result of the deplorable mismanagement of the refugee question is the loss to the nation of the eager willingness to work of thousands of aliens whose one hope for the future lies in the defeat of Germany. Considerations of military security must, as Sir John Anderson says, take precedence of all other considerations. But that is no justification, on any but the shortest of views, for the present clumsy machinery by which whole groups of aliens are interned, irrespective of their individual records. It is to be hoped that the Home Office decision this week to give special consideration to those French people in this country "willing actively to support the Allied cause" may speedily be extended to cover those of other nationalities.

Meanwhile it is cause for satisfaction to know that Mr. Bevin is preparing to put an end to the waste of man-power represented by industrial disputes, which, as we observed two weeks ago, cost the country, in May, 91,000 working days. It is typical of the spirit with which the nation is facing the coming test that a Labour leader should be found willing to call on organised labour to surrender one of its most cherished rights in the interests of the community.

Reverting to unemployment changes in June, these are illustrated by the following figures relating to the industries chiefly affected, which indicate the wide spread of the month's decline in unemployment.

Comparison with May 20, 1940.

<u>Industry</u>			<u>Increase (+)</u>
			<u>or</u> <u>Decrease (-)</u>
Building	..	..	- 20,489
Distributive trades	..	..	- 14,078
Public works contracting	..	..	- 12,203
Coal mining	..	..	- 8,180
Agriculture, horticulture, etc.	..	..	- 7,038
Dock and harbour service	..	..	- 6,956
Cotton	..	..	- 6,752
Local government service	..	..	- 6,565
Iron and Steel	..	..	- 4,208
Metal goods manufacture	..	..	- 3,919
Engineering, etc.	..	..	- 3,537
Road transport	..	..	- 3,262
Miscellaneous food industries	..	..	- 3,012
Printing and bookbinding	..	..	- 2,647
Textile bleaching, dyeing, etc.	..	..	- 2,614
Hotel, boarding house, etc., service	..	..	- 2,471
Shipping service	..	..	- 2,389
Gas, water and electricity supply	..	..	- 2,234
Dressmaking and millinery	..	..	+ 3,176
Tailoring	..	..	+ 3,001

NOTE: The total number unemployed in July was 827,200 or about 60,400 greater than the June figure. Between July 15 and August 12 the number of unemployed in Britain fell by 27,900.

Actually, there was a reduction of 50,000 in the number of men and women registered as unemployed. The number of boys and girls, however, rose by 22,000, because many young persons leaving school were unable to find work immediately.

The total registered unemployed on August 12 was 799,453, which is a reduction of 432,240 on the figures for August last year.
